

2. New mechanisms that coordinate and consolidate wetlands mitigation efforts would be pursued.
3. DEM would explore the feasibility of a mitigation bank in consultation, as appropriate, with agencies, potential mitigation bank users, wetlands restoration specialists and others. If a bank is determined to be feasible, efficient, and effective, wetlands mitigation banks would be created on a manageable scale to compensate for unavoidable losses of wetlands resulting from economic development projects. If mitigation banks are created, DEM, DCM, USACE, EPA, USFWS and other involved agencies would form an interagency team to evaluate wetlands sites and potential bank sites within each basin. Bank sites would be acquired by public or private means. The interagency team would review all proposed projects with anticipated impacts on identified wetlands for compliance and permit authorization. Mitigation of wetlands sites would be completed prior to commencement of a proposed wetlands-disturbing project. The interagency team would identify and incorporate an evaluation methodology for classifying disrupted and mitigated sites to determine mitigation credits and debits. All involved parties would agree to credit and debit procedures as well as restrictions on use of bank credits.
4. Education and public awareness of new state wetland mitigation procedures would be undertaken by DEM and DCM.

Evaluation Method

Individual projects would be evaluated through site inspections and tracked by the interagency team to insure compliance with the mitigation bank agreement. Basinwide wetlands inventories (Objective A, Management Action 2) would be updated on a regular basis to identify trends in wetland type, extent, and function.

Costs and Economic Considerations

In support of this option approximately \$500,000 would be needed by DEM to establish a coordinated, statewide mitigation program. One third of this amount, \$170,000, would allow the development of a well-managed mitigation program that would coordinate wetland restoration activities associated with both regulatory and non-regulatory programs as well as provide a full accounting of wetlands losses in the APES region. While wetlands regulations can have important economic impacts that should be carefully considered by policy makers, this Management Action does not change current wetlands regulations. It is instead focused on encouraging the most cost-effective use of public and private funds spent on wetlands